

The World Bank



DISABILITY IN LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

There are at least 50 million disabled people in Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC) or approximately 10 percent of the region's population. Although methods of data collection across the region vary greatly, a recent study in Brazil estimates the prevalence of disability in the country at 14.5 percent.

Disability is an important cause and consequence of poverty. About 82 percent of disabled people in LAC live in poverty, which in most cases also affects family members.

Disabled people tend to experience widespread exclusion from the social, economic and political life of the community, whether due to active stigmatization or to the neglect of their needs in the design of policies, programs and facilities.

Disability is especially high in post-conflict countries and in areas of natural disasters.

Education

Only about 20-30 percent of children with disabilities are attending school in the region. Poor attendance by disabled children derives from severe lack of adequate transportation, teacher training, equipment, furniture, learning materials, and access to school infrastructure. In addition to these visible barriers, impediments to quality inclusive education also come from attitudinal barriers.

--In Honduras, people with disabilities have an illiteracy rate of 51 percent compared to 19 percent for the general population.

--Only an estimated 20 percent of regular schools in Brazil are accessible to disabled children and less than 10 percent in Mexico.

--In Surinam, 90 percent of disabled children in school attend special segregated schools

Employment

About 80-90 percent of disabled people in LAC are unemployed or outside the work force. Most of those who have jobs receive little or no monetary remuneration.

--In Argentina, the unemployment rate of disabled people is estimated to be close to 91 percent..

--In Mexico, the 75% of the population with disabilities are unemployed.

Health Services

Most people with disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean lack access to health services and even physical access to health buildings. Persons with disabilities are also more likely to be rejected by health insurers. As a result,

important services or devices to help disabled people are not provided. In countries for which data is available, less than 20% of disabled people receive insurance benefits.

--In Ecuador, 84 percent of disabled people have no insurance benefits.

World Bank work on disability

Among recent efforts to address inclusive development, the Bank is working with other regional organizations, such as the Inter-American Development Bank, on developing methodologies and general standards to measure the number of disabled people in the region.

The Bank is also supporting programs that tackle disability in the region, including:

--Accessible

rail and bus-based **mass transit** systems in Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru

--**Inclusive education projects** in Uruguay and Brazil

--Reconstruction of **health infrastructure**, such as in El Salvador.

What is disability?

Disability is the result of the interaction between people with different levels of functioning and an environment that does not take these differences into account. In other words, people with physical, sensory or mental limitations are often disabled not because of a diagnosable condition, but because they are denied access to education, labor markets, and public services. This exclusion leads to poverty and, in a vicious circle, poverty leads to more disability by increasing people's vulnerability to malnutrition, disease, and unsafe living and working conditions.

Note: Country data is based on the *International Disability Rights Monitor (IDRM) Regional Report of the Americas 2004*.

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For more information on World Bank activities in the region, please visit: www.worldbank.org/lac